

Play in the sun and sleep under the stars throughout Indiana.

By Sally Campbell Grout

Sometimes, camping can be a great way to get away from it all. To stop and enjoy nature. To hear nothing but the sound of the crickets. To move at a leisurely pace. Other times, camping is the perfect end to a fun-filled, action-packed day. These Indiana venues combine plenty of activity with plenty of places to pitch a tent, park your camper, or unroll your sleeping bag.

**Here, even the crickets say “vroooooom.”**

Even the most casual observer knows that the Indianapolis area is the place to be to enjoy motor sports. However, it's more than two or three huge events at that famed oval Speedway that draw fans; nearby Indianapolis Raceway Park, known as IRP (317-291-4090), is home of the world's largest drag race, NASCAR competitions, and more than 100 other racing events. Fans: mark your calendars. The IRP welcomes the 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Kroger SpeedFest, a Premier NASCAR Busch Cars and Craftsman Truck event this August 5-7. And September 1-6, IRP hosts the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Mac Tools U.S. Nationals, an NHRA Premier Drag Racing Event.

That IRP excitement combines perfectly with a relaxing night of camping at Raceview Family Campground in Clermont (317-852-5737). Offering special event camping for activities that take place at both IRP and the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, Raceview Family Campground is a family-friendly facility established in 1965. Feel free to pitch a tent or park your RV.

**Chug, chug, camp, camp.**

Anyone who has dealt with road rage (and who hasn't?) can appreciate the joy of traveling by train. Someone else drives, and you sit back and watch the scenery roll by. And what better place to watch that scenery than along the Whitewater Valley Railroad (765-825-2054) in Connersville? This operating railroad museum rolls through some of Eastern Indiana's most scenic spots, and offers several excursions, including a Wild West Train and the Connersville-Metamora Train, which takes travelers to an 1830s canal town and state historic site. Special trips, such as the Pumpkinliner and the Santa Claus Express, are also on the schedule. The Whitewater River Campground and RV Park (765-825-4885), also in Connersville, is a passenger stop. This amenity-filled campground offers live Bluegrass and country music most summer weekends.

**Fish: beware**

When your trolling motor is charged and your cage is full of doomed crickets, what's better than a picturesque lake filled with fish? How about eight lakes? At Chain O'Lakes State Park in Albion (260-636-2654) all eight lakes conveniently connect to create a perfect setting for small boats and the people in them. If you can't fit all eight into one day, the park's campgrounds offer no less than 406 campsites.

**Where natural wonders never cease.**

Perry County (888-343-6262) certainly makes life convenient for those who appreciate Mother Nature's handiwork. Here, the rolling hills of the Hoosier National Forest overlook the majestic Ohio River. Measuring in at nearly 200,000 acres, the Hoosier National Forest offers day after day of outdoor fun, including fishing, hiking, swimming, boating, canoeing, horseback riding, and mountain biking. True adventurers can pitch a tent at the German Ridge Recreation Area (812-547-7051), which offers primitive camping in the heart of the forest. Be sure to put the Ohio River Scenic Byway on your route home, and park the car long enough to enjoy the view of the locks and dam from an overlook tower.

**How's that trailer hitch holding up?**

Connect that boat up to the back of your vehicle and hit the road to the Patoka Lake Recreation Area (812-936-2405). Don't have a boat of your own? There are plenty of them available to rent in the area. Either way, you'll find yourself at an ideal spot to water ski, fish, or float the day away. The lake itself is 8,800 acres, and the recreational opportunities that surround it are apparently endless. You can learn more about them at the solar-heated Visitor Center. What's more, there are almost as many ways to sleep as there are to play. Houseboats, cottages, motels, cabins, and bed and breakfasts are all available in the area. The Patoka Lake Recreation Area campgrounds (812-685-2464) provide even more opportunities for outdoor fun, with an archery range; a Frisbee golf course; hiking, fitness, and bike trails, and 448 campsites.

**Here, every muscle counts.**

For some, a camping or outdoor getaway provides a chance to unwind, rest, and refuel. For others, it's a chance to test endurance, fitness, and skill. Muscatatuck Park in North Vernon (800-928-3667) fulfills both needs. Certainly, the park is quiet and peaceful, with scenic vistas and wildlife waiting at every turn. Even the Visitors Center is camera worthy; it's located in an 1850 home. However, Muscatatuck Park is also a great place to rock climb, boulder, bike, and hike —activities for the serious athlete. Even the campgrounds are geared to two types of campers: sites are available for both RVs and tents.

**Bring the whole crew.**

Everyone in the minivan is sure to have fun at Hidden Paradise Campground (765-525-6582) in St. Paul. Located on the Flat Rock River, all 75 acres of Hidden Paradise are geared toward family fun. The campgrounds themselves boast virtually every amenity you could imagine, including tennis courts, on-site swimming, and boat rental. The Flat Rock River offers wading, swimming, fishing, canoeing, and—for those who want a very small taste of adventure—mild rapids.

**Two perfect places to call it a day.**

After a full day at Indiana Beach in Monticello (574-583-4141), you'll probably be exhausted enough to fall asleep in the parking lot. After all, Indiana Beach fills a day with five great roller coasters, other amusement rides, a giant water park, a sand beach swimming area, entertainment, and restaurants. But before you get cozy on the asphalt, you may want to consider one of two nearby campgrounds: Indiana Beach Camp Resort (800-583-5306) and Jellystone Park Camp Resort at Indiana Beach (888-811-9644). Free transportation is provided to and from the park for both locations. The Indiana Beach Camp Resort is geared to accommodate plenty of people, offering 989 sites and welcoming both tent and RV campers. Jellystone's air conditioned lounge offers a great place to cool down after such as busy day; additional amenities at this 147-site facility include tent and RV sites, fire rings and electricity hook-ups.

**Don't worry; they're contained.**

If you hear a little howling in the distance while you're staying at Wolfe's Leisure Time Campground in the Lafayette-West Lafayette area (765-589-8089), your ears aren't deceiving you. Wolfe's is not far from Wolf Park in Battle Ground (765-567-2265), a non-profit educational facility where you can learn about wolves, foxes, coyotes, and bison, and—if you time your visit right—howl with the wolves. Wolfe's (the campground, that is) is also conveniently located near Purdue University, restaurants, and the Wabash River.

**Save some room in the trunk.**

It's not often you find "shopping" among activities at a campground, but several campgrounds in Northern Indiana are conveniently close to Shipshewana, and its renowned Flea Market & Auction and shops filled with handcrafted furniture. Located in Indiana's Amish Country (800-860-5949), Shipshewana also offers opportunities to learn more about the Amish and Mennonite cultures. There are several campgrounds in the area, including Shipshewana RV Parks (North Park Location, 260-768-7770; South Park Location, 260-768-4669). Both put you close to all the shopping, activities, and tours.

**And save some time in your day.**

Twin Mills Camping Resort in Howe (260-562-3212) is also conveniently close to Shipshewana, but you'll want to spend plenty of time right on the campgrounds, too. A full-time recreation director plans activities for all age groups. Walk wooded trails, swim in the heated pool (or the kiddie pool, if you're a little one), test your skills at miniature golf, canoe or boat on the lake, and fill your time here with dozens of other options for outdoor fun.

**Ready to dust off that canteen?**

Indiana has dozens of other campgrounds, and each one puts a unique spin on fun. To find the campgrounds—and the activities around them--visit [enjoyindiana.com](http://enjoyindiana.com).